

Media Skills Training

**To ensure your “shot”
downrange hits its “target”**

Capt. Marisol C. Zammit
Public Affairs Officer

**“The only good reporter
is a dead reporter.”**

**“The media is the
enemy!”**

**PURPOSE OF THIS CLASS IS TO
FAMILIARIZE YOU WITH THE MEDIA
AND TO HELP YOU BETTER
UNDERSTAND YOUR ROLE WHEN YOU
COME IN CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA**

"As with our legislative initiatives, our best spokesmen and women are, and will continue to be, individual Marines demonstrating their capabilities and speaking for and about their Corps."

General C.C. Krulak, USMC ret.

Why should you talk to the media?

- **American public opinion directly influences all levels of warfare.**
- **We have intrinsic value to the Nation and our existence is dependent on the will of the American people.**
- **If we don't tell our story, no one will.**
- **The media will tell the story with or without our input...**

**REMEMBER, WHAT THE PUBLIC
THINKS DEPENDS ON WHAT THE
PUBLIC HEARS**

TELL THEM YOUR STORY

**Need for timely, accurate
information**

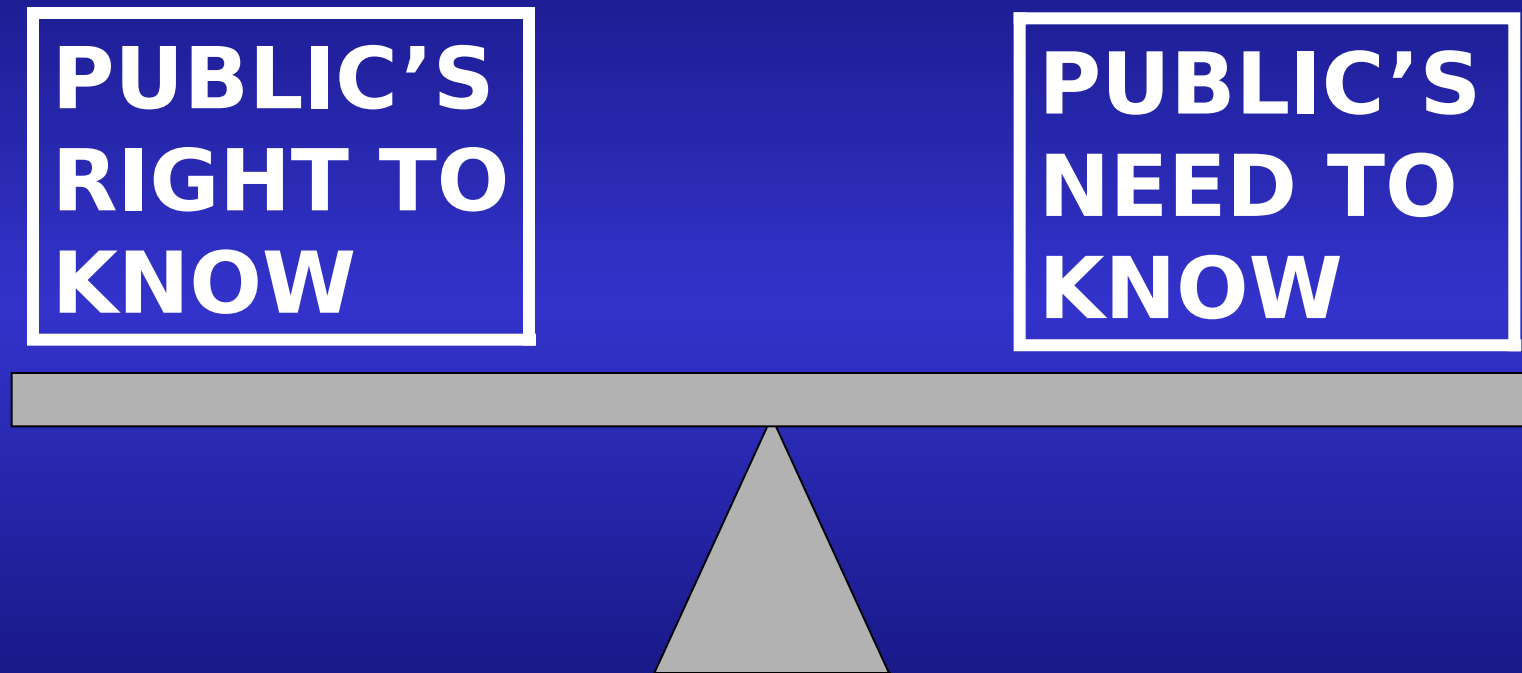
DOD Policy

- **Information to the public – free of bias, censorship or propaganda.**
- **Will not classify to protect government from embarrassment.**
- **Will not release info:**
 - **Matters of national security**
 - **Harm lives and privacy of the service member.**

We tell the Marine Corps story to:

- **Preserve the nation's faith and trust in the Marine Corps.**
- **Good stewardship of taxpayer's dollars.**
- **To uphold our accountability to the American public.**
- **To comply with DoD policy of, "Maximum disclosure with minimum delay."**

The “Balancing Act”



Maximum Disclosure, Minimum Delay
Debarity - Accuracy - Propriety - Policy

Media Capability

- **Civilian technology permits live coverage 24 hours a day without any dependence on military support.**

Influence of Mass Media

- **Satellite/Digital Revolution**
- **Media is independent on the battlefield**
- **24-hour news cycle**

Impact of Media

Gulf War:

- “Perception is reality.”

Post gulf-war:

- 24-hour news cycle
- “No one wins unless CNN says we win.”

Understanding the media...

Limitations

- Short deadlines
- Inexperienced reporters
- “If it bleeds, it leads.”

What sells:

- Prominence
- Proximity
- Conflict
- Emotion - death
- Oddity
- Sex
- Suspense
- Progress
- Current Trends
- Impact and timeliness

Should you engage?

- **What is the reporter's purpose?**
- **What is my purpose?**
- **What is the reporter's background/reputation?**
- **Consult with your boss & PAO.**
- **Are you the right person?**

Role of the PAO

- **Advise.**
- **Research.**
- **Interview preparation/rehearsals.**
- **Arrange the interview.**
- **Lay down ground rules.**
- **Act as liaison.**
- **Provide after-action, follow-up.**
- **Play the “bad guy.” (murder board, read-aheads)**

Types of Interviews

- **OPPORTUNITY** (“door stop” or “on the fly”)
- **GENERAL** - arranged.
- **ACCIDENT, INCIDENT, CRISIS or CONTINGENCY.**

The Bottom Line...

- **It's the right thing to do.**
- **We have to.**

**Tell the
Marine Corps' story**

**Remember: What you say or do
could have an impact on the world**

**“You can save the
world; but if no one
hears about it, it didn’t
happen.”**

**“Share your courage
with the world.”**

Remember:

- The media is not the enemy.
- Media will be in theater during any major operation, usually before us.
- In order to ensure that our actions are accurately presented and portrayed in a positive way, we must establish a sound relationship with the media.

Questions to Expect

- Who's in charge?
- Where are you from?
- What's your job?
- What's your mission?
- What's your unit?
- How long will you stay?
- What do you hope to accomplish?

Beware, they're not always that easy.

IMMEDIATE ACTION!

- Decide if you are the right person to talk to the media. If not, find your SNCO, Commander or PAO.
- Every Marine is a rifleman, but **every Marine is also a Marine Corps spokesperson.**

MajGen. Mattis' 3 rules for talking to the media:

from 1st MarDiv brief before OIF

Rule No. 1:

No wimps in front of the camera.

Rule No. 2:

Know your job and your mission!

(But don't spill the beans about ongoing or future missions.)

Rule No. 3:

The media is:

No better friend, no worse enemy!

General PA Guidance

- Media coverage is on a non-interference basis
- No media should be unescorted – direct to nearest PA rep
- Don't simply avoid the media – be professional and courteous in directing them to the PAO
- YOU are the Marine Corps when doing an interview
- Be brief and concise; 15-30 second sound bites
- Relax, be yourself and remain composed
- Never let your guard down

BOWLING:

Stay in your lane!!!

ALPHABET SOUP:

Avoid acronyms and
jargon!!!

JAMES DEAN:

Always keep your cool!!!

MUHAMMED ALI:

Lead with a punch!!!

007:

Know what is and isn't
OPSEC!!!

SEA STORIES:

Tell the truth!!!

PLEAD THE FIFTH:

It's OK to say you don't
know!!!

WASHINGTON POST:

If you don't want to read
about it, don't say it!!!

Keep In Mind

- **Mission, Intent, Endstate**
- **Sound/Video bites**
- **Body language**
- **Nothing is “off the record.”**
- **What’s releasable?**
- **You are in control.**
- **Forget the camera, and talk to the reporter.**

Engaging the Media

Communication Objective

- **What are your COMMAND MESSAGES?**
- **Create a message geared to the reporter's audience.**
- **Mission, Intent, Endstate.**

Components of Effective Messages

- **Contains Comm. Objective**
- **Puts your most important messages up front.**
- **Clear, concise and to the point (15-20 second sound bites)**
- **Has a “people perspective”**
- **Avoids color words like “catastrophe, slaughtered, etc...”**
- **Avoids negative words.**
- **Accentuates the positive.**

“On The Record”

- **“On the Record”**
- **“Off the Record” - printable but not for attribution.**
- **“Background” - facts not attributable to an official source.**
- **“Deep Background” -not for attribution/not printable.**

DOs and DON'Ts

- Agree to do the interview
- Be friendly, assertive and positive
- Discuss only what you know or have responsibility over – stay in your lane
- Do not discuss political or foreign policy matters
- Do not discuss operational capabilities or future plans
- Don't speculate or render opinions on real or hypothetical situations
- Never say, “no comment.” (hiding something)
- Never lie or stretch the truth
- Don't answer questions with just a “yes” or “no”

DOs and DON'Ts (cont.)

- If you don't know the answer, say so
- Use laymen's terms; Avoiding jargon and acronyms
- Always look at the interviewer and not the camera
- Avoid embarrassment – discredit to Corps
- Take time to analyze the question and formulate an answer before speaking
- Avoid repeating negative, sensitive or controversial words - scandal, death, dangerous, horrible; media will use them
- If you say something inappropriate, incorrect or sensitive, ask the interviewer to stop and disregard
- Control the interview and convey positive messages, despite negativity, loss of life

Control the interview - don't be controlled

- **BRIDGING** – focus on main points, and don't allow tangents
- **BUNDLING/PACKAGING** – up front and factual, importance, tie-ins to focus
- **HOOKING** – baits reporter to ask questions about which you want to talk
- **FLAGGING** – Nonverbals to lead to a point

Springing the traps

- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer–active listening
- DEAD AIR – a pregnant pause which usually follows a tough question – you don't need to fill it. Say what you have to say and stop. Have a command message ready.

Springing the Traps

(cont)

- If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification.
- Assume the mike/camera is always HOT (on).
- Avoid impromptu remarks – don't drop your guard.
 - “For the price of a rental car they could have had a prostitute...”

Springing the Traps

(cont)

- **INTERRUPTIONS -**
- **1st Time - ignore**
- **2nd Time - Say, “Let me finish...”**
- **3rd Time - Say, “Please don’t be rude and let me answer...”**
- **Don’t get angry.**

Springing the Traps (cont)

- **OFF TOPIC - stick to objective / ground rules.**
- **EDITORIALIZING - reporter making commentary that supports their bias.**
 - **Don't become argumentative**
 - **“What exactly is your question?”**
 - **Bridge to Command Message.**

Basic On-Air Tips

- **Uniform** – check your appearance.
- **Eyewear** – allow viewers to see your eyes (sunglasses are a “no-no.”)
- **Camera angle** – slight angle.
- **Guard your flanks** – never be in the middle of two interviewers.

Basic On-Air Tips (cont)

- **Don't slouch or rock back and forth.**
- **Microphone – get wired.**
- **Relax and be yourself.**
- **Don't let your guard down – never get too comfortable or friendly.**

Basic Field Tips

- **Take off your helmet or cover** – let the viewers see your eyes.
- **Check background for sensitive or classified items.**
- **Know your subject.**
- **Check current news – if possible.**
- **Anticipate questions, formulate responses.**

*** Command Themes ***

- **Core Values**
- **Stability and Security Operations**
- **Discipline, honor, loyalty**
- **Leadership in the Marine Corps is the strongest its been**
- **Corps has been founded on solid leadership and the notion to take action and succeed**
- **Training to assist the Iraqi forces to rebuild their nation and take control of their own destiny**

Themes (cont)

- Moral Component important – **values, ethos, attitude and culture.**
- **Iraqi ownership** – what we do now is foundation for future success.

**Leadership
sets the
example**

QUESTIONS???